

openheart Reflections on my journey as editor-in-chief of *Open Heart*

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LAUNCHING A NEW ERA IN CARDIOVASCULAR PUBLISHING

As I approach the end of my tenure as founding editor-in-chief of *Open Heart*, I am filled with a sense of reflection on this very exciting journey. When we launched *Open Heart* in January 2014, our mission was to advance scientific publishing in cardiovascular sciences by embracing open science, making research results available to everyone. This was a response to the limitations of traditional publishing models and a commitment to enhance scientific progress and global access to research. This journey, while immensely rewarding, also presented unique challenges and learning experiences that shaped both the journal and my perspective on scientific open access publishing.

BREAKING NEW GROUND WITH OPEN ACCESS

Initially, concerns were raised about open access potentially reducing publication quality. However, *Open Heart* has consistently disproved these fears. Our unwavering editorial independence has ensured that financial considerations do not collide with our commitment to publishing impactful and relevant articles.

In our inaugural editorial when launching this journal, we underscored the importance of breaking down barriers in knowledge dissemination and collaboration.¹ Open access, a fundamental principle of *Open Heart*, guarantees that research is accessible to everyone. Open data encourages public scrutiny and further data analysis and is a catalyst for innovation and scientific advancement. Open science can elevate research and foster intellectual discourse.

A DECADE OF MILESTONES AND GLOBAL IMPACT

Over the past decade, *Open Heart* has been a leader in implementing these principles. Our achievements, including a notable initial impact factor of 2.7 and high Altmetric scores

for many of our articles, like 947 for the 2022 Tromsø Study, highlight our global reach and influence.² This showcases the journal's global reach and relevance beyond just the academic community. It was especially nice to see engagement even by patients, possibly also facilitated by the accessibility of our articles.

GRATITUDE TO OUR COMMUNITY OF EXPERTS

I want to especially thank all our authors who have published contributed to *Open Heart*, helping to move cardiovascular science and patient care forward. I enjoyed the direct interaction with you all very much, I was impressed by your diversity, geographically and in terms of expertise, and this has enriched this journal and made it very attractive for our readers.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to all peer reviewers who have enriched *Open Heart* with their diverse expertise and geographical backgrounds. Your contributions have been instrumental in advancing cardiovascular science and patient care, making our journal an inclusive platform for readers worldwide. Your inputs have often significantly improved the quality and clarity of an article before publication, sometimes even altering the overall conclusion. Your work will become increasingly valuable, as I foresee a growing need for peer reviewers: the growth of scientific output and the increasing complexity of research, while many of you are juggling this task with your own clinical and administrative responsibilities, your own research and teaching commitments.

UPHOLDING EXCELLENCE THROUGH PEER REVIEW

Your peer-review work upholds the scientific integrity of the entire field. The COVID-19 pandemic has once more highlighted the importance of a robust peer-review system to avoid delays in publication of potentially life-saving new research findings, while at the



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same time guaranteeing validity. While we carefully plan for the need of future doctors and specialists, we should similarly plan for the increasing need of future peer reviewers. We should introduce peer-review training into cardiology fellowship programmes and scientific journals should establish mentorship programmes. These initiatives would encompass key aspects like research ethics, medical writing, study design and understanding biases, aiming to nurture the next generation of skilled reviewers.

I advocate for a shift in academia where universities and research institutions formally recognise and reward peer reviewers, integrating their invaluable efforts into promotion, tenure and funding decisions. This acknowledgement is essential for sustaining the quality and integrity of scientific research.

MY JOURNEY: FROM REVIEWER TO EDITOR

Engaging in peer review is not just a service to the community, it is an investment in your own scientific acumen and professional network. It offers invaluable benefits, such as the opportunity for young professionals to develop their expertise, to understand the publication process, foster collaborations and build relationships with journal editors. We editors sometimes consider good peer reviewers to publish an editorial comment alongside a paper, we also consider good reviewers for editorial roles. As a matter of fact, this is how I personally ended up in my role as editor of this journal: I started doing peer reviews for the *BMJ*, actively engaged with its editorial team, became associate editor for *Heart*, also for the *BMJ*, and ended up helping to start this journal, *Open Heart*, as funding editor-in-chief.

MY OUTLOOK FOR OPEN HEART

My belief in the transformative power of open access remains unwavering. I urge the cardiovascular community

to continue advocating open access to data and research articles. As I pass the leadership baton to Professor Ganesan Karthikeyan, I am confident in his ability to guide *Open Heart* into a new era. I envision the journal continuing as a relevant contributor to open cardiovascular science, expanding its influence and fostering innovative advancements in cardiovascular medicine. I trust that the journal's inclusive nature and personal touch will be preserved under his leadership, and I encourage our readers to maintain their active engagement and support.

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